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SUBJECT: OSCE/PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO SERBIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER VUK JEREMIC

¶1. Post is authorized to present the following statement at
the September 10 Special Permanent Council meeting in Vienna.

Begin text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Minister Jeremic back to the
Permanent Council.

Mr. Minister, while recent events in Georgia have
unquestionably drawn much attention to the situation in the
Caucasus, we want to assure you that we have not lost track
of important issues in Serbia and in Kosovo.

The United States is aware of Serbia's initiative requesting
that the UN General Assembly refer the question of Kosovo's
independence to the International Court of Justice. We do not
support this initiative and see it as counterproductive.
Kosovo's independence is legitimate and fair, and recognizing
Kosovo was the right thing to do. Kosovo's independence
contributes to greater stability in the region and allows all
the states in the region to focus on their futures and on
greater cooperation with the rest of Europe. Three quarters
of both EU member states and NATO have recognized Kosovo's
independence to date, as have a clear majority of the 56 OSCE
participating states. This issue is resolved. Rather than
continuing to cover this ground, we would encourage Serbia to
look to the future, and to pursue its expressed wish for a
European future. In this regard, we stand ready to cooperate
with Serbia to help your country find the peace it deserves
at home and in its surroundings.

Kosovo faces a challenge in finding a meaningful role in its
society for its Serb community. The United States stands
committed to working through the OSCE and directly with the
government of Kosovo to ensure that we continue to reach out
to the Serb community in Kosovo. We are encouraged that
Kosovo governmental leaders continue to urge ethnic Serbs to
participate as local leaders, police, justice officials, and
municipal officials, and are keeping doors open to those
ethnic Serbs who choose to participate. The Government of
Kosovo has adopted laws on decentralization and local
government designed to create new municipalities in which the
Kosovo Serb community is in the majority with enhanced
competencies over their own affairs. The Prime Minister has
also appointed an ethnic Serb to head the Office for Minority
Communities to promote multi-ethnicity in Kosovo. Mr.
Minister, your country can play either a constructive or an
obstructive role in this process. We of course hope for the
former.

We would also look to you, Mr. Minister, for changes that can
help the OSCE Mission in Kosovo be even more effective in its
efforts in the future. In particular, the current situation
in which the mandate of that mission is renewed on a
month-by-month basis is harming the Organization's ability to
recruit and retain qualified staff. You can play a decisive
role in correcting this situation.

Turning to the activities of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, the most recent report of the mission describes activities in police training and recruitment, support for democratic awareness-raising such as parliamentary simulations in high schools and co-operation with the National Assembly, and war crimes awareness events, among others. Serbia's support for these efforts is praiseworthy. The United States appreciates the close cooperation between the Government of Serbia and the OSCE mission, and hopes that with the help of that Mission, Serbia will continue to make progress, including on war crimes prosecutions, to reach its aspiration to fully integrate in Europe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

End text.
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